Bush Must Keep His Word- July 13, 2005

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By Rep. Louise M. Slaughter

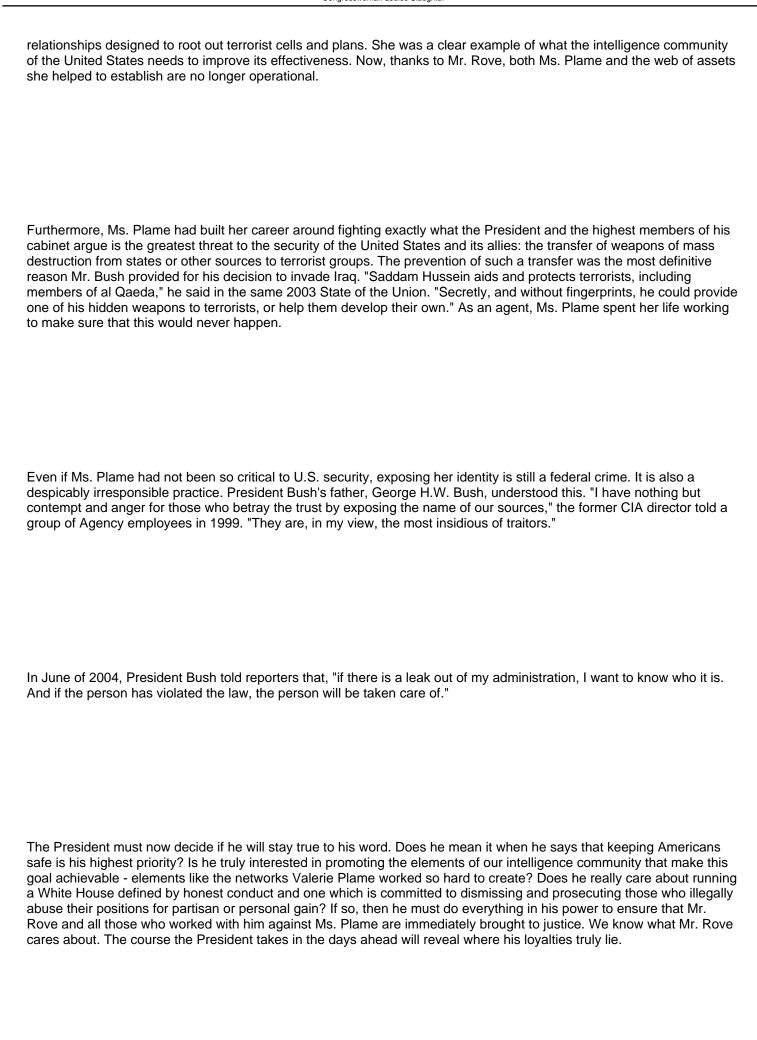
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When he took office, President Bush told the American people that his White House would be defined by honor and dignity. After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, he told us that he would do everything in his power to keep Americans safe. In the wake of the revelation that Karl Rove, Mr. Bush's Deputy Chief of Staff, revealed the identity of former CIA operative Valerie Plame to a reporter, the strength of the President's word is being tested. If Mr. Bush attempts to cover up what is a gross abuse of power and a vicious, destructive, and near-sighted act of political vengeance, then he will have failed to live up to the promises he has made. The exposure of Valerie Plame was an attack on more than the values which the White House professes to uphold: it was an attack on the security of the United States itself.

When forced to choose between protecting its reputation and protecting Ms. Plame so that she could continue her work, the White House valued its own security first. Plame's husband, Joseph Wilson, had gone to Niger in 2002 to investigate whether Iraq had sought uranium there. He reported that it had not, but his report was ignored, and in his 2003 State of the Union Address, the President told the nation that, "Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Wilson became increasingly critical of the administration's pre-war intelligence gathering, and for that he was branded an enemy. In a deliberate and unabashed attempt to punish him and to keep him quiet, the identity of his wife was revealed. Ms. Plame's vital work on behalf of the country had apparently become irrelevant, as had her personal safety and the safety of her contacts. Her crucial role in the war on terrorism didn't seem to matter any more, either.

The degree to which Mr. Rove's absurd priorities have endangered America becomes clear once we understand how important Valerie Plame was. She was at the heart of the war on terrorism. At a time when the President has repeatedly called for a strengthening of American human intelligence capabilities, Ms. Plame was a critical human intelligence asset within the CIA. She was an experienced, deep-cover agent who had spent years cultivating an expansive network of

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